

*James ...
Mr Good Mares ...*

79.

A
SERMON

On *Psal.* CXIX. V. 57.

Shewing wherein the
Good Man's Portion

AND
Dependence

CONSISTS.

By JAMES DAVIES, M.A.
Rector of Barton-Mills in Suffolk.

Imprimatur, Guil. Jane.

Dec. 6. 1678.

L O N D O N :

Printed for *Henry Brome*, at the Gun in St. Paul's
Church-yard, near the West-end. MDCLXXIX.

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and proposed to which all a man's actions may
 tend, and all his other ends be subordinate. For
 as the Moralls truly tell us, it is impossible for
 him to govern his Actions well, who has not in
 the main, directed his life to one certain end. The
 consideration of this end, and the means to
 the obtaining thereof, constitute your duty.

Now, you shall find but a very
 few persons, who have directed their life to one
 certain and shured end, which is the truest
 end of Wisdom; and therefore it is that Man

*Thou art my portion O Lord; I have said that I
 would keep thy words.*

For the avoiding of which subtleties and
 want of design in mens actions, the Advice of Sa-
 viour Jesus Christ is an Account of David's Re-
 solution and Choice. His Choice
 is expressed in the former clause,
Thou art my portion, O Lord; his
 Resolution in the latter, *I have
 said that I would keep thy words.*

From the former we may observe, That it is
 a special part of Wisdom to have ones choice well
 and thoroughly fixed, and particularly to have it
 fixed upon God, so as to make him our portion.
 First, it is a matter of great importance, and a
 special part of wisdom, to have ones Choice well
 and thoroughly fixed; that is, to have one certain



end propounded, to which all a man's actions may tend, and all his other ends be subordinate. For as the Moralists truly tell us, it is impossible for him to govern his Actions well, who has not in the main, directed his life to one certain end. 'Tis the Observation of a great and wise man; Say he, Consider mankind, consult your acquaintants, or your reading, you shall find but a very few persons, who have directed their life to one certain and assured course, which is the truest drift of Wisdom: and therefore it is, that Mankind is generally so defective.

For the avoiding of which unsettledness and want of design in mens actions, the Advice of Seneca is very material; As often as thou dost consider what thou shouldst do, or what thou shouldst avoid; be sure to look for direction to that which thou hast made thy chief End; for to that, whatsoever thou doest, ought to agree: But then be sure that thou have first settled that. For 'tis an error, that we pretend to advise about particular Ends, when we have not resolv'd upon, nor settled the general End, without which no man can arrive at any certainty or Uniformity of Living.

That thus to have settled one's End, and the scope and design of one's Life, is a matter of great importance, may be confirmed from common

men Observations and Experience, shew it to be so in all the Affairs and Undertakings of Men. He who addict himself to the War, and resolves upon that kind of life, is much more likely to do great things in the *Martial way*, than he who only happens to be a Souldier, or is driven to it by Necessity. Or, he who intends for Merchandize, if he resolves to make it his business, and bends his Mind and Thoughts that way, is more likely to thrive and grow rich, than he who is not yet resolv'd what Profession to follow.

He who is thus loose and undetermined in his choice, is like to do but little good in any thing he sets about, till he be better resolv'd and set. Even so it is in our Christian Profession. He who hopes to attain to the *Ends* of Religion, must make it his business; he must remember above all things, whither he is design'd. There are many things that will interpose and require some of his time and thoughts, but that which is Chief in his heart must be, that he may gain that Pearl of great price, and arrive at that happiness which he has made his choice.

As Merchants in their Voyage touch at divers Ports to cleanse and victual, and perhaps trade for some small matters: But their chief care and drift is, that they may get with safety to the Port whither they are bound. So it is with every diligent

gent Christian; he cannot varies with the World, because tis necessary for him in his Voyage; he touches upon the Caves and Obstacles of this life; because they are in his Way, and he cannot well avoid them. But his heart is chiefly set upon that *Jerusalem* which is above; and his principal Care and Endeavour is that he may get with safety thither. *And he will make it his business if he resolves to make it his business*

Now by the Consent of the Wise Men of all Ages, the great and last End of Man is *Happiness*. And amongst us Christians, there is no Question, but that happiness consists in the Favour and Enjoyment of God; such an enjoyment of him in this life as this life is capable of; and a more perfect and immediate fruition of him in Heaven. This therefore is our main End. This we ought to fix upon as the Principal Object of our Choice, and to look upon it as our great business in this World, That God may be our Portion. *And this is the Second Branch of the Proposition, That it is the Wisdom of every Man and Woman to make God their Choice and Portion.*

What it is to make God our Portion, is plain enough from the common notion of the Word *Portion*, which signifies a share in the division of any thing; especially of Estates and Inheritances; such a share as Parents use to give their Children, which being the necessary foundation of their

Subsistence in the World, they look upon them as
the main Dependence. So might God to be the
Portion of every faithful Soul, that is, He ought to
be the Comfort, the Treasure, the main Dependence
of every faithful person.

But how can the infinite Incomprehensible
God be said to be the Portion of a Creature?
We must know, that the Expression is not to be
understood of God Personally or Essentially. For

so, no Creature can comprehend, contain, or pos-
sess him. But it is spoken according to the fami-
liar Style of Scripture, and may be explained by
other places of the like nature.

As where God
calls Abraham his Friend, and tells him, I am thy
shield, and thy exceeding great reward, Gen. 15. 1.

And where David calls God his comfort and his
joy, his hope, his rock, his fortress, and the like;

which Expressions are not to be understood in a
strict and literal, but in an Analogical sense.

So that the Particle *Thou* must be understood
either Exclusively, or Causally.

Firstly Exclusively, *Thou*, and none other in com-
parison of thee; As if the holy Psalmist had said,

I value my Interest in Thee far above all other
things.

All other things, as they are infinitely below
thee, so I do not think they deserve to be named

in Comparison with thee. The same thing is
most

most fully and affectionately exprest; *Psalm 137* where David seems at first to have admired Riches and Prosperity, to have thought them a Valuable Portion, and therefore to have envied the Prosperity of the wicked; but when he better considered, and saw the Vanity and Uncertainty of their condition; being destitute of the Fear and Favour of God; he retracted his opinion, and altered his Choice. *Then he preferred God above all, v. 1.* *25, 26. Whom have I in Heaven but thee, and there is none upon Earth that I desire in comparison of thee. My flesh and my heart faileth, but God is the strength of my heart, and my portion for ever.* If we thus explain the Psalmist's words, by way of Comparison, the Wisdom of his Choice is so evident, that it needs not to be proved. For what is any creature in comparison of the Creator? What is outward Splendor or felicity, in comparison of the Favour of God, which is better than life it self? What are the goods of this world, to that Immortal Kingdom which is above? What are the poor low gratifications of our Senses and vain Affections for the present, in comparison of those Purer Delights, and more Excellent Glories of the Kingdom of God? Indeed there is no comparison betwixt these, and therefore it were very needless to insist on this sense any farther.

Secondly, *Thou art my Portion, to wit, Casually; Thou,*

Thou, that is, the *Emanations of thy Goodness* are my Portion.

God is to be loved and chosen in regard of his Infinite Perfections. In regard of his Power, whereby he does whatsoever he pleases in all the World; In regard of his All-sufficiency, because he alone is able to make us perfectly happy; In regard of his Infinite Wisdom; whereby he knows the Exigencies of our Condition, and what is fittest to be done for us: But specially, in regard of his Goodness, and the Effects and Emanations of it, whereby he is inclined to concern his Wisdom and Power and Providence, for the good of them that love him. So that to speak explicitly, it is as much as if David had said; Oh Lord! the *Participations of thy Goodness* are my Portion. Thy Word and thy Blessing, thy Favour and Protection, the assistance of thy Grace, and the sense of thy Love, thy Gracious and Comfortable Presence now, and the hope of enjoying thy Glorious Presence hereafter; these are my Choice, my Portion, and my onely Treasure.

Let us take a short view of each of these, and we shall find that they amount together to a vast Portion.

First, Thy Word, and the Gracious manifestations of thy Self and of thy Will therein, is to me a great Portion and Treasure. Nothing will be more plain to us, than that David esteemed it so; if we read over this Psalm, and observe, how often he

mentions and celebrates the Word of God, and declares the great Love and Esteem that he had for his Statutes and Commandments. We may see it almost in every other Verse of the Psalm throughout. What Interjections of Love and Delight does he breath out upon this Occasion! v. 97. *Oh how I love thy Law! all the day long is my study in it.* And in the beginning of the Psalm, vers. 14. *I have rejoiced in the way of thy Testimonies, as much as in all Riches.* And vers. 111. he professes that they were his Portion, and his Joy. *Thy Testimonies have I claimed as my heritage for ever, and why? they are the very joy of my heart.* Certainly, howsoever we value it, 'tis a singular Favour of God, that he vouchsafes us his Word for our guidance and direction; and that he has been pleased therein to discover to us somewhat of Himself, and of our duty and happiness.

Neither of these could be known any otherwise, with any measure of Certainty; and without the knowledg of them, how sad and uncomfortable would our condition be? To find in our selves desires after Happiness, and yet not to know what that Happiness is, nor where to find it; to feel our condition calamitous and unhappy, and not to know to whom to address our selves for help, nor upon what considerations to stay our minds; to have a stormy and troublesome Journey to go, and at the End of it, no other repose than that of the Cold Grave and the Chambers of Death; the Uncertainty it self, and much more

more such Expectations, would be sad and amazing. Yet such would our condition be, were it not for the Light of God's Holy Word; which alone acquaints us with the Gracious Purposes of God towards us, and the provision which he hath made for our everlasting Happiness after death; whereby we are armed with courage and good Hope, and enabled to bear all things cheerfully, in a joyful apprehension and assured expectation of the Glory that shall be revealed.

Without Divine Revelation, we could be at no Certainty in matters of Religion; which would reduce us wholly to a life of Sense, and render our condition no better than that of the Beasts that perish. Nay, it would be much worse than that of the Beasts. For though perhaps their Pleasures and Enjoyments are not so refined as those of Voluptuous men; yet neither are they so Interrupted with the Conscience of death, which as oft as it occurs, even in the midst of Laughter, is enough to make the Heart Sorrowful. And from this, nothing can secure us, but that which upon possible Conditions gives us hope of the Comforts and Joyes of the future Life.

Briefly, What Light is to the World, that the Word of God is to the Soul. Take away the Light; and what do all the Works of Art and Nature signify? The World it self seems to be vanisht, when the Light is gone; and if it should so continue, the

World would be a Chaos, and a Dungeon, not worth the Inhabiting. So truly without this Divine Light, we should be lost as to our spiritual and rational; that is, to our best Capacities; which ought therefore to inlead unto us the presence, and possession of this Sacred Treasure, and ingage us to walk in the Light of it.

Secondly, As the Knowledge, so much more the Grace of God, is a great Portion.

Under this may be comprehended, both the gracious Acts of the Divine Providence; and also the Comforts and Assistances of the Holy Spirit.

First, in respect of the Divine Protection and Goodness: So David esteemed God his Portion. As if he had said; Oh Lord! by thy Providence I live, and by thy Goodness I am maintained and preserv'd, and deliver'd out of all danger and distress; and not only so, but I have a comfortable life, and a plentiful subsistence, (as we know God rais'd him from the Sheepfold to the Throne,) and what more can a man have to his Portion? We might truly say the same, if we had thankful hearts as he had, to consider from whence our Blessings come. Our Houses, our Lands, our Wealth, our Friends, our Children, and whatsoever else we value, or account dear to us in this World, proceed all from the Bounty and gracious Providence of God. And therefore in reason, these later, as being the Causes of the former, ought to be esteemed our Portion, rather than the things themselves. The things themselves may be lost, or taken

taken from us; but the *Causes* of them are a *Treasure* that cannot fail. The goodness of the Lord endures for ever, and ever, upon them that fear him; and his Righteousness upon Childrens Children. Psal. 105. 1.

Again, in respect of the *Aids* of God's grace, and the assistances of his Holy Spirit; so David accounted the Lord to be his *Portion*. As if he had said; When I consider the greatness of my sins already committed, and the weakness and proneness of my Nature to fall into the same or the like again, and thereby to provoke thy wrath, and expose my self to the dreadful *Effects* of it: when notwithstanding all this, I consider that there is forgiveness with thee, to pardon my sins; and remit my deserved punishment; and not only so; but that thou art pleased to give me grace, and strength, and tenderness of heart, whereby I am preserv'd and restrain'd from running headlong into ruine: when I consider all this, how infinitely do I find my self bound to thy Grace, how deservedly ought I to esteem it my *Portion* and *Treasure*? I should be a miserable Creature without it, and therefore I cannot but think my self happy, in that thou art pleased to make me a partaker of it.

Lastly, *Thou art my Portion*, that is, thy Presence, and the hope of Enjoying thee, is my *Portion*. As if it had been said; This is that which I mainly aim at and long after; this is that which I esteem my great and last Happiness: That after the enjoyment of thy gracious Presence here, I shall enjoy thy Glo-

rious Presence hereafter. This is indeed the great Portion and Inheritance of the Sons of God, the refuge, and hope, and expectation of every faithful person. Every thing besides this, is too little and mean, to be the Portion of an Immortal Creature.

The place we now converse in, and the things that are before us, are indeed fit accommodations for our Journey, but these we must leave behind us to the next Travellers that come after. We may not abide by these, but hasten towards another Country, that is an heavenly, where our Portion and Inheritance is reserved for us. On this Portion, Abraham, and Isaac, and Jacob, and all the Holy Men of God, have ever depended. And we find that it was the result of David's dependence in an eminent manner, Ps. 17. 14, 15. Where David distinguisheth himself from the men of the World, who have their portion in this life; and declares what his portion was; *As for me, (saith he) I will behold thy face in Righteousness, and when I awake up after thy likeness, I shall be satisfied with it;* which is generally interpreted of the Presence of God in that blessed Estate after the Resurrection.

This is the first Argument to prove the Wisdom of this choice, because of the Excellent things that are contained in this Portion; the Knowledge of God, the Light and Comfort of his word, the assistances of his grace, the protection of his providence, the sense of his favour and gracious presence here, and the hope of the Vision and fruition of him in glory:

glory: To these may be added, (as an inforcement to this first Argument,) the excellent properties of this portion, and the things contained in it; to wit, the sufficiency, and durableness of them; as also their suitability to the Nature, and necessities of our Souls.

First, One excellent property of this portion, is its sufficiency. It is able of it self alone to make us happy. This property the Philosophers required in their Supreme God. But they knew not well, where, nor in what object, to look for it: because they knew not God. They turned themselves first to one Object, and then to another; to health, and wealth, and honour, and pleasure, and wisdom, and whatsoever else they could devise. They found some worth and Convenience in many of these things; but as for that ἀσάφεια, or self sufficiency, which they required to the constitution of true happiness, in vain did they seek for that in any Creature. Every thing under the Sun, in this respect, is no better than Vanity and vexation of Spirit. The likeliest thing they could think on, wherein to place Happiness, was the Operation of Virtue; which indeed is a Lovely and Venerable thing: but far enough (in many cases) from making the possessor happy, were it not for that God, who is the gracious Encourager and Rewarder of it. He alone hath that Fulness and All sufficiency in himself, which can fill all our Souls, and answer all our Wants, and satisfy our utmost Capacities.

So David resolves in another place, where he seems to put this Question, concerning the happiness of Man, Ps. 41.6. *Who will shew us any good?* he resolves it thus; *Lord lift thou up the light of thy Countenance upon us.* And in the following Verse, he declares; *Thou hast put gladness in my heart, more than ever Worldly men had in the time, that their Corn and Wine and Oyl increased.* And so again, Psal. 144. after he had reckoned up the Blessings of this life, he concludes thus; *Happy are the people that are in such a case, yea blessed are the people, who have the Lord for their God.*

A Second Property of this Portion, is, that 'tis certain, and durable. It is the great disparagement of all the things of this World, that they are all finite and transitory. The Psalmist therefore justly reproves the folly of those Worldly great men, who persuaded themselves, that their houses should continue forever, and their dwelling places to all generations, and called their Lands after their own names; whereas Man being in honour abideth not, but (in respect of his present mortal condition) is like the Beasts that perish, Ps. 49.11, 12. Honour, and Wealth are slippery things, that can hardly be ensured to any man for the little time of this life, but 'tis certain they can be kept no longer. No man can carry away any thing with him when he dies; neither shall his Pomp follow him.

Daily Observation and Experience proves the same

same in all other Examples. The best things we have of this World are here to day and gone to morrow. A few daies, or perhaps a few hours, shall change the most Vigorous health into sickness, and languishing. He who now lives delicately, and at ease, will within a short time be arrested, if not with want, yet with pains and infirmities, that will make his good things tasteless and unsavoury, and bring him down to the Worms and Dust. He who is happy in his friends or relations, must expect e're long to part with them, and to have nothing left of them, but the bare remembrance. The same is equally true of all other Worldly enjoyments. We may possibly out-live all our share of them. It has happen'd so to many, the greatest men in their times; such as *Cæsar*, *Darius*, *Perseus*, and many more; who from great and high estates, as it were from the top of Worldly felicity, were tumbled down as in a moment into bonds and poverty, and all the extremities of an unprosperous condition. But what need we examples of that, when we see nothing in the World but Change and Uncertainty, of which every one is or shall be an Example himself, even thou who readeest, as well as he who has written. The World *must* fail every one who depends on it, for two certain causes; because *that* is mutable, and *we* are mortal. God hath made every thing here mutable by the standing Laws of his Providence, and he hath made our condition here as well

by the *Laws and Constitutions* of our Nature, as by his positive Sentence and Appointment; so that in either respect we can have here no durable certain portion.

But what a weakness or rather madness is it, to chuse that for ones portion, which he is sure to lose? how extremely miserable must his condition be, when he comes to have his Portion taken from him? When a man who has made this World, and his own will and pleasure in it, his only end and portion, shall be strip'd of these, and have nothing left to carry with him when he goes out of it, but an accusing Conscience, nothing of good, not so much as good hope left, to nourish and satisfy his Soul in its endless duration.

How much a wiser and happier course shall we take, to secure to our selves that other Portion which is certain and perpetual? God is Eternal, and his Favour is Endless, 'tis not subject (in its own Nature) to diminution or decay. It lasts as long as we live; and when we die, it accompanies us into the other World, and gives us comfort and confidence in his presence and the holy Angels, and puts us into the possession of never-ceasing joyes. To this Portion therefore does our Blessed Saviour direct his Disciples, *Matth. 6. 19, 20.* Lay not up for your selves treasures upon Earth, where rust and moth corrupt, and where thieves break through and steal: but lay up for your selves Treasures in Heaven, where neither rust nor moth do cor-

rupt

enpt, and where Thieves do not break throughs, nor steal
 and Thirdly, This is such a Portion as provides for the
 necessities of the Soul. The comforts of it are spiri-
 tual and internal, and so more suitable to the ratio-
 nal and better part of Man.

The Soul is a Principle distinct from the Body, as
 appears by this amongst other Arguments, that 'tis
 not to be satisfied with bodily Objects or Enjoy-
 ments. In the midst of these, a man's mind may be
 ill at ease. It may be wounded with guilt, or over-
 whelmed with sorrow, or amazed with fear of the
 Divine Vengeance. It may be disturbed as Belshaz-
 zar was in the midst of his Feasting and Jollity. It
 often happens, that in the midst of this kind of laugh-
 ter, the Heart is sad, and the end of that mirth is heaviness.
 The Soul is so far from being satisfied with these
 things, that the abundance of them is rather apt to
 cloud and debase and darken it, and to make its
 condition worse than it would be in the absence of
 such abundance. So that these are no suitable Por-
 tion for the Soul. We might as well expect to satisfy
 a hungry stomach with good words, as to satisfy the
 Soul with sensual Enjoyments. These are as much
 too gross for the Soul, as the other are too thin and
 meagre for the Body.

But the Portion here mentioned is abundantly
 sufficient to enrich and satisfy the Soul.

The devout Contemplation of God and of his Exce-
 lent Power, Glory and Goodness, do mightily raise

and refine and delight the Soul; how much more the enjoyment of him. As he is the Author, so he is the proper *Object* of our spirits; which never seem to be at home, but when they are conversant with him. And therefore it was absurdly affirm'd by *Epicurus*, (as *Plutarch* well Observes, and largely proves,) That the disbelief of a God, and of all future recompence, tends to the quiet and happiness of mens lives; whereas there is nothing more true than the contrary. The very thoughts of God are better able to stay our Minds, and calm our Passions, and ease our troubles, than any other consideration whatsoever. And the comforts of his Word, and assistances of his Grace, and other Emanations of his Goodness, (such as have been mentioned,) have that force upon our spirits; that when we can attain to some sence of these, and keep our selves in some moderate possession of them, we cannot but think our selves happy in this imperfect state. We joy in God through our Lord Jesus Christ, saith the Apostle, *Rom. 5. 11.* and *Vers. 2.* We rejoyce in hope of the glory of God. And *Vers. 165.* of this Psalm, Great peace have they who love thy Law. Now Peace, and Joy, and good Hope, are the proper Entertainments of the Soul. And these issue naturally from a Religious application of our selves to God, and from the sence of his favour, by which our Minds are refreshed and comforted for the present, until they can be restored to that

that Immense Fountain of Goodness, and be made to drink of those Rivers of Pleasure for ever.

Thus much concerning the great things contained in this Portion, and the excellent Properties of it.

A Second Head of Arguments to prove the Wisdom of this choice, may be taken from the *Effects*, and *Benefits* that are consequent to it.

Particularly; 1. The fixing of our hearts firmly upon God as our Portion, is a good help to make us *steady and constant* in that which is good, and to prevent the contrary evil of Inconstancy. We know of how great moment *Constancy* is in matters of Religion. It is a property that cannot be separated from it, without frustrating the whole design of it. It is the great Condition our Saviour requires of his Disciples, *If ye continue in my Word, then shall ye be my Disciples indeed*, Joh. 8. 31. and Chap. 15. 4, 5, 6. *Abide in me and I in you. He that abideth in me, the same bringeth forth much fruit. If a man abide not in me, he is cast forth as a branch cut off from the Tree. Therefore Vers. 9. Continue ye in my Love.* There is scarcely any man so bad, so utterly void of all sence of Religion or Humanity, but that at one time or other he may do some worthy things. Nero himself, whose name is so infamous for Cruelty and Bloodshed, is said once in his life to have wept, when the Sentence of a Malefactor was brought to him to be signed, and to wish that he could never have written.

It is only Order, Moderation, and Constancy, that shews a wise Man and a good Christian. All other things may be found in an indifferent and defective man. Now what likelier means can there be to establish the heart, and make a man constant, than fixed and deliberate Choice? When the Mind is engaged upon one Object, and so not at liberty to rove and wander after others? Whereas a double-minded man (that is, one who is undetermined in his Judgment and Choice) is unstable in all his waies, Jam. 1. 8.

Such a one lives, like a man that walks without any design, who is indifferent, what hast he makes, or what path he takes. Sometimes he goes forward, and sometimes he stands still, and looks about him, and by and by he turns aside to the next Object that invites his Eye: whereas he that is to run for the Goal, makes all the hast that's possible. He listeth not to loyter nor to gaze; but he bestirs himself with all his might, because the Goal is in his eye, and the honour and reward of overcoming are in his thoughts. So 'tis likewise in this case; he who hath not settled this in his heart, That Religion is his business, and that God alone is the Portion of his Soul, and that all other things are but vain, or at the best but indifferent; will be apt to turn aside to those Vanities, which he has not yet learn'd to disesteem. But on the other hand, he who is thus perswaded, is not
so

so like to go astray; but having fixed his End, and that so wisely, will be apt to proceed more *Evenly and Regularly* toward the attainment of it. If any thing happens to come in his way to tempt or divert him, he presently remembers that this is contrary to his measures, and to the choice he has made. And therefore he turns away from the Temptation, and his heart turns towards God, and minds him that He is his portion, which it would be a madness to deprive himself of, for any of the foolish momentary enjoyments of Sin. No doubt they, who have seriously made such a Choice, will find themselves to be thus engaged; and there is scarcely any Temptation, which such a posture of mind will not enable a good man to resist and overcome.

Secondly, the benefit of making God our Choice and Portion, appears, by the *Ease and Comfort* of it in every Condition. First as for Ease; 'tis an uneasy thing to have ones mind *unsettled*, and much worse to have it settled on a wrong Object, which is the case of all vicious and ungodly men. For either such men do not prefix to themselves any certain End, but live at *Large*, like the irrational Creatures, that eat and drink and enjoy what's before them, without considering any farther end of their being; or else they addict themselves to some particular *Vice* or *Vanity*, which instead of easing and comforting the mind, afflicts and confounds it, when a man comes to reflect on the miserable Choice he has made. On the other

other hand, nothing can contribute more to a state of rest and inward satisfaction, than to have one's Choice settled, and to have it fixt so happily as upon God. This sets the whole business of a man's life at a stay, and frees him from the solicitude of his thoughts, and from the trouble of farther consultation. It answers his mind, as to the great Question of happiness; and so settles his spirit, and puts him into such a condition, that 'tis not an easie matter to disturb the repose, and happiness of his life. 'Tis likewise highly beneficial in respect of the Comfort of it in every condition. If the Lord be our portion, it cannot be imagined that we can want any thing that is good for us. For whatsoever is wanting in other kinds, is abundantly made up in him. His love and favour, and blessing, and assistance, the consideration of his gracious providence, and the hopes of his glorious promises, are sufficient to make us happy, whatsoever our outward condition be. There will be Concussions in the World, and Troubles in mens particular affairs. Sad casualties, sicknesses, disappointments, losses, calumnies, defamations, oppression, and violence; these are the common Enter-tainments with which the World treats its guests at one time or other. All which, tho they be grievous to flesh and blood, yet they have not that powerful, nor malignant influence upon those who trust in God, that they have upon others who live on themselves. If they happen to be surprized at the first approaches
of

of trouble, they soon recal and recover themselves. They know they have a *friend*, and they look up to him, and that (like our Saviour's presence with his Disciples on the Sea) calms; and stills the rage of their troubles, and furnishes them with such considerations as these. What tho my Friends are taken from me? yet God is with me, who took me out of my Mother's Womb, and hath sustained me ever since I was born. What tho my health be impair'd, and my body grown feeble, so that I cannot enjoy my self as formerly? Alas! this is not the thing on which I depend, this weakness may bring me nearer to that which is my *main End*, of which if I secure my duty, I am sure, neither pain, nor age, nor any other Accident can deprive me. What though my portion in the World be small? yet I have the Creator and Disposer of it. Tho I am *low*, he is *high* above all; and I am sure his Providence takes a care of me. I am rich enough, if I can but keep Patience and Integrity. Lord thou art my Portion, Oh! make me happy in a faithful adherence to thee, and in the communications of thy Love and Goodness to me, and I have enough.

This has alwayes been the Refuge and Comfort of the People of God, to retire to Him, and there to hide and shelter themselves from the storms of this present evil World. This bore up *Job's* spirit, and helpt him to get above the miseries of his Condition; I know that my Redeemer liveth, &c. *Job.* 19. 25.

The same was *David's* constant refuge, who in the midst of the greatest dangers and distresses, when he had nothing left to secure him, but *God's* protection; thought himself safer in *that*, than in the security of Castles and fenced Cities. And therefore he so often calls God his Refuge, and strong hold; his Castle, and deliverer: Not only because he trusted that He would deliver him out of his troubles, but because he found that he supported him under them, and gave him such Comfort, as made his Condition happy, when in outward appearance it seemed to be desperate.

Of this we have many Instances in the story of his Life, particularly after the sacking of *Ziklag*, *1 Sam. 30. 6.* Where the text saith of him, that he was greatly distressed; for the people spake of stoning him; (but 'tis added in the close of the verse) but *David* encouraged himself in the Lord his God. The like he declareth of himself, *Pf. 142. 4, 5. I looked on my right hand, and beheld; but there was no man that would know me. Refuge failed me, no man cared for my Soul. I cried unto the O Lord; I said, thou art my Refuge and my Portion in the Land of the living. The same was the comfort of the three Children, when they had no other prospect, but that of Death, and a burning fiery Furnace. Our God whom we serve is able to deliver us, Dan. 3. 17.*

To these we may add the Examples of the Apostles, and First believers; whose lives were a continual warfare, yet they were more than Conquerors. They were

were compassed about with Evils on every side: but they were so far from being distressed or cast down at it, that they joyed in God, and *rejoyced in their Tribulation*. They had nothing, yet *having him for their Portion*, they were as though they had *possessed all things*.

Now he who has thus settled his Affairs, that he is or may be happy, in despite of the World, and the worst things he can meet with in it, cannot but be granted to have taken a very wise course, and to have made a very wise and beneficial Choice.

Thirdly, the Benefit of it is seen in this, that 'tis an infallible means to mortify us to this World; because it engages us not to make any other thing our Portion. But this will fall in most fitly with the last particular, which shall be, to Enquire, by *what means* we may compass this great End and business of our Lives, To have God for our Portion.

The best direction in this case will be,

First, that we *chuse him for our Portion*. And Secondly, that we *do as David resolves in the close of the verse, I have said that I will keep thy word*.

First, to *chuse him for our portion*, is the way to make him so. If this seem a small or easie matter, we must know that there is a great deal comprehended in this Choice. It implies that we prefer God in our Judgment, and Esteem, above all other things; and that we prefer his Love and Service;

before all the delights, and present advantages of Sin. It amounts in effect to what was mentioned before, That we make not any *other thing* our portion. Other things we may have, and esteem, and enjoy them too, in their just measure and degree: but we must not overvalue them, nor dote on them, we must not bestow our hearts on them, nor repose our trust and happiness in them. God must be uppermost in our love and esteem, (as *Solomon chose Wisdom* before Riches and Honour) otherwise he will not be our Portion.

To this purpose our Saviour hath told us in effect, That we cannot have our *Treasure* on Earth, and in Heaven, *Matt. 6. 19.* He hath told us, That we cannot *serve two Masters, God and Mammon*; if the one be our Portion, the other cannot, will not be.

But since we are allowed to love other things, how shall we know whether we make them our Portion or not? We may know it by the room and place those things have in our hearts. If they have the preheminance, they are our Portion; for two Chiefs or Principals cannot consist together in our choice. If God be our Portion, all other things will be chosen, and loved, and used in subordination to him, and his love and Service.

It will not be difficult for us, if we observe the motions of our own hearts, to make a Judgment concerning our selves. In the Course of business and Temptation, we may sometimes observe a kind of Competition.

Competition betwixt God and our selves; that is, betwixt our duty, and our corrupt Inclination, and Interests. Now when 'tis come to a struggle and Competition in the Will, observe which side usually prevails, and we shall soon know how the case is with us.

If the awe and love of God, and a Religious sense of our duty, prevail; we may conclude we are right so far. But if vain and corrupt inclinations prevail; we may so far conclude, that God is not our Portion. For that is every mans Portion, which he prefers, and values, and seeks after most: Indeed it is in effect his God, and his being carried out after it with love and delight, is that Idolatry of the heart, of which the Scripture speaks. For Instance, He who sets his heart on the World, and hunts after riches unreasonably, and sticks not to violate his Duty and his Conscience for the gaining and keeping of them, and prefers them before the true Riches; such a man has his portion in this World, and is guilty of that Covetousness, which the Scripture calls Idolatry. The ambitious man likewise, who will do any thing to be great, and climbs up to it by base compliances and unworthy Actions, he has made choice of his Object, Vanity is his Portion: And so for those who make their Belly and their pleasure their God, meat and drink and other base sensual Liberties are their Portion. So likewise the Envious and Malicious, who will contrive and repay evil, and practise

Life, revenge (contrary to the express will and Law
 of God,) *mischief* is their darling and their Portion.
 The thing is as true in all other Instances, where
 'tis plain that our duty lyes on one hand, and Sin
 on the other. If we see the sin before us, and accept
 of the Temptation to it, we do by just Interpretation
 prefer it before God, and the rewards of Religion,
 and take it for our Portion. That which
 sways a mans will, and bears rule within him, and
 disposes of him, and his Actions, is in very truth his
Idol; howsoever he may flatter himself to the contrary,
 or persuade himself, through his partiality, that
 God will interpret it otherwise. Consequent
 to this first means of making God our Portion, is,
 that holy and happy temper of being *Indifferent* to
 the things of this Life. If we can be moderate, and
 Indifferent about *these*, 'tis an evidence that our
 hearts do not cleave to them, and that we do not
 look on them as our Portion. This indifferency
 consists in an evenness of mind towards temporal
 good and evil: not to value, or love, or desire
 the one, as though our Happiness depended
 on it; nor to dread the other, so as to think our
 selves miserable and undone, when any temporal
 evil befalls us; but to look upon both with a
 deference and submission to the will of God, always
 esteeming him as our main refuge and dependence.
 For the maintaining and preserving of which good
 indifferency, we must take heed of eager and importunate

tunate

minate desires on the one hand, and of excessive fears and solicitude on the other. For people to be sick for any thing they desire, as *Ahab* was for *Naboth's Vineyard*, *1 Kings, 21.* Or to be clamorous, and importunate, as *Rachel* was, saying, *give me Children or else I dye*, *Gen. 30. 1.* Or to be distressed at any cross accident, as *Rebecca* was, only on supposition of *Jacob's* marrying one of the Daughters of *Heth*, saying, *What good shall my Life do me?* *Gen. 27. 46.* Or indeed as *David* was for his ungracious Son *Absalom*, when God had but newly delivered him out of his hand, so as to wish, *would God I had died for thee*, *2 Sam. 18: 33.* It is too much for good people to be thus Violently concerned for any of these things. When we fear things, or grieve for them, with so much dejection and distress of mind, 'tis a sign we lov'd them too well, and that we do not depend upon God so entirely as we ought: and so on the other hand, when we long for any thing with so great Ardour, and Intenseness of desire, 'tis a sign we place our happiness in it, and that we could be willing to quit all else, and to make it our Portion. It argues that we look not much unto God, nor regard what his Will and Pleasure is, if we can but accomplish our own desires on any Terms. Such eagerness and impetuousness of affection shews, that our minds are not stayed upon God, but that we look after other things besides him as Principal Ingredients of our happiness. It shews that we are not rooted and grounded

grounded in his Love, and that our Wills are not sufficiently subdued to his Holy Will and just Government. It is a matter of great consequence therefore, to have this indifferency firmly settled in our minds, as that which will minister greatly to the ease and happiness of our lives; and without which, in some good measure, we cannot be said in any tolerable sense to have God for our Portion.

Lastly, If we would have God for our Portion, we must do as *David* here resolves and promiseth, *I said (or I have promised) that I would keep thy Word.*

To keep God's word, is the same, as to do his Commandments; which the Psalmist subjoyns as the condition of that high priviledge of having God for his Portion.

He is not to be had on any other Terms; neither are we to expect that he will make us happy in his favour, when we provoke him with our Sins. These intercept the Influences of his Grace, and obscure the light of his Countenance. They displease, and provoke our Heavenly Father, and make us unmeet for the Portion and Inheritance of his Children, If we would have him for our God, we must be his People; and how can that be made appear, but by being governed by his Laws? This is the constant Tenour of the Covenant; and there is no pretence, nor priviledge whatsoever, that can entitle us to the blessings of it, unless we walk as the People of God. 'Tis not enough that we call our selves his People, neither

neither is it enough to do as those spoken of in the Prophet *Ezech. 33. 31.* *They sit before thee as my people, and hear thy words, but they will not do them; for with their mouth they shew much love, but their heart goeth after their Covetousness.* God is not to be imposed upon by such Pretences, neither will he be flattered, where he is not truly loved and obeyed. The truth of which is to be tryed by that rule of the Apostle, *Rom. 6. 16.* *Whom ye yield your selves Servants to obey, his Servants ye are to whom ye obey, whether of Sin unto death, or of obedience unto Righteousness.* It is not enough that we wear his Livery, or bear the badge of his Servants; but we must do him actual service, otherwise we cannot expect to receive wages from him.

God was in a peculiar manner the God of Israel, and he calls himself a *Husband to Israel*; but when they deserted his service, and committed abomination, he retracted that Relation; and commanded the Prophet to use the name *Lo, ammi.* for ye are not my people, and I will not be your God. *Hos. 1. 9.* and Chapter 2. 2. *she is not my wife, neither am I her Husband.* God will not be ours, unless we be His, neither will it avail us to be his in Name only, but we must be so in deed and in truth.

After all this it must be acknowledged, that we are frail sinful Creatures; and that our great security and confidence lyes in the Infinite Mercies of God, and the merits of our Saviour. But 'tis a Religious care over our selves and over our ways, that quali-

fies, and makes us fit for the mercy of God: that he may pardon that, wherein through weakness we come short of our duty. This was the Course that David took, whom we find begging of God for mercy, vers. 2. *be merciful unto me according to thy word;* but wherhal he resolves in this verse, *to keep God's Law,* and vers. 3. he is said to have performed what he promised, *I turned my Feet to thy Testimonies.* And so Job, tho his great Confidence was in God, yet the sense of his own Integrity made his confidence more rational, and satisfied him that it was not only a vain presumption. And therefore he thought it fit to make protestation of his Innocency and Integrity. Chapter 31. To this purpose our Saviour plainly tells that young man, Mat. 19. 17. *if thou wilt enter into life, keep the Commandments.* Where he makes the one of these the necessary Condition of the other, and implies, that no man can obtain Eternal life without keeping the Commandments.

One thing more may be observ'd from the form of the words, *I have said, or I have promised,* that I would keep thy words; the Psalmist seems here to call to mind, and renew some former resolution and promise, whereby he had more solemnly devoted himself to the Service of God.

Herein we shall do well to follow his Example. Doubtless good Resolutions (not to speak now of Vowes) are of great use to help to keep us close to our duty. For when a man finds himself, bound

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(as it were) by his own *act* and *deed*, and engag'd by a Covenant which he has made with himself, upon the best and most important Reasons; this cannot but strengthen him in the performance of his duty. David bound himself in the strictest bonds of this kind, as is more fully express'd, verse, 106. *I have sworn, and I will perform it, that I will keep thy Righteous Judgements.*

Besides, as this is useful to our selves, so 'tis available with God, for the obtaining of his favour. For when we thus dedicate and devote our selves and our lives to his service, it will move him to communicate himself more freely to us, and to become our Portion.

The design of all that has been said, is first to move every considerate person, to enter into Account with himself, and see what Choice he has made. Let him ask himself what has been, and is his main business, and design in the World, and see what answer his Conscience will make him.

If he have yet made no settled Choice, he has done very unwisely in spending so much time without design. If he have made a *wrong Choice*, it is high time to inquire into it, to the end he may be convinced of his Error, and amend it.

Let him know then that every one who lives in any vice or custom of Sin, is justly interpreted to have made *that* his Choice; although perhaps he have not chosen it with the Circumstances of a for-

mal Deliberation and Election. Now for the recovery of such a one, 'tis necessary for him to make an Estimate of the quality and true Value of that which he has accepted of for his Portion. And indeed in this respect a vicious person may be said to have some *advantage* by his folly; because he is, or may be convinc'd out of his own *experience*, of the Emptiness, vexation, and dissatisfaction of the wayes of Sin. If such a one would but hearken to his own reason, and conscience, or if he would but diligently consult his *Memory*, I believe it might be left to himself to make his own Choice without any farther direction. Let him turn back, and see of what nature those things are, about which he has been busied all this while. Let him ask his Soul, whether he has found comfort, or satisfaction, in any of those things which he has hunted after with the neglect, or gross Violation of his duty; what *good* any of his Sins ever did him; and whether he has any reasonable hopes that they will do him good in the End. Whether he can think that any of those things which he has *seen*, or *enjoyed*, or *addicted* himself to in the World, are a fit Portion for an immortal Creature? whether he has met with any Object, that is able to make him substantially happy, and to secure him in that happy *State*? He must be more than an Ordinary *wretch*, that will pretend to affirm any such thing; and if there be no such Object here to be found, he may be sure he has been wrong all this while, and

it concerns him: now to make a wife and a better
Choice. And indeed, if we do but duly attend to them, our
own minds will point and direct us to God. They
naturally incline towards him, as things do towards
their center and place of rest. He is the Supreme good
of our Souls, and therefore he alone is to be chosen,
and all other things to be neglected, and despised, in
Comparison of him.

Secondly, if we are conscious to our selves, that
we have made this choice, it should engage us to ex-
ercise great degrees of Patience and Contentment;
and help to moderate our fears and sorrows for other
things. For why? if God be our Portion, is it not
enough? is not he Allsufficient? cannot he make
us happy, unless the World also smite upon us?
Indeed we are too apt to think so, but tis for want of
Faith, and an holy dependance upon God. If we
could live up to the Effects of having God for our Por-
tion, it would mightily raise and enable our Spirits,
and set us much above the reach of worldly Suc-
cesses and Events. Too great concernment about these
is a disparaging of our Choice, and discovers World-
liness, Irresolution, and Folly. 'Tis to imitate the
folly of that Miser, who pin'd for the loss of
his *smoak*, when his Coffers were full, and his For-
tune over-flowed.

Lastly, as we ought to chuse God for our Portion,
so ought we to live continually in the View and

sense

sense of the choice we have made; that so we may neither forget our engagements, nor contradict what we have done, nor frustrate our selves of our main End, by any contrary intermediate Actions. Every way of Wickedness makes it appear, that our Choice in this kind is but dissembled; & that there is nothing of truth or reality in it. For how can any one say, that God is his Portion, when he prefers other things? How canst thou, without blushing and confusion, say to God, *Thou art my Portion*, when thy heart goes another way; and thou followest thy own will and ways and Inclinations, which are contrary to his will, and the rules and Laws which he has prescribed? Thou mayest not think that he will be thy Portion ever the more for such a nominal, pretended, superficial Choice.

What therefore must we do? We must keep close to our Choice, and be that our behaviour may be agreeable to it. We must often call it to mind, and keep it, as it were alwaies in our Eye; and by the View of that (as of our Port) we shall be directed the better to steer our Course.

We should likewise often recollect, and call to mind, our settled Religious Principles. We should thus commune with our hearts, I have determined long ago, that nothing in this World is to be depended on for happiness. I will therefore use and enjoy every thing here as tho I did it not. I believe, and by Experience find, that God alone is able to satisfie my

Soul;

Soul ; my business therefore shall be to serve him, and seek his Favour. I am satisfied, that the great business and concernment of every one, is, so to order their lives, that they may dye well, and live with God for ever, when this Minute of life is expired. And being thus convinced, and persuaded I know I ought not to go against my own sentiments, but to live according to my Principles, and according to my aims and expectations. I have chosen God for my Portion , which is the highest privilege any Creature is capable of. I am therefore bound to walk worthy of this *high calling* as far as I am able ; and so to exercise, and accustom myself, that I may be the better fitted for the holy Presence and Enjoyment of God. Such principles imprinted on the Heart, and often resorted to, will be apt to infer and produce such good effects.

The good God give every one of us the Wisdom to chuse the *better part*, and the Grace so to apply our selves to the obtaining of it, that *it may not be taken away from us*. Amen.

F I N I S.

